

Publication: The Times Of India - Chennai;Date: Jun 28, 2009;Section: Times City;Page: 2;

When life is not all that perfect

Sashi Nair | TNN

Chennai: It was free-wheeling discussion on love, sex, marriage and extra-marital affairs centred around the launch of a book in what many still consider to be conservative Chennai. The story in the book revolves around the life of a young woman and the break-up of a family, with her father being unfaithful to her mother many times over. It affects the protagonist deeply and as the world crumbles around her, she tries to find meaning in love, friendship, faith and joy.

Setting the tone at Landmark, where the book was launched, was the irrepressible Ranvir Shah, theatre and art enthusiast.

"Monogamy sucks, polygamy works, serial monogamy is useless," he quipped, adding on a more serious note, "Are we getting sexually liberated because of globalisation?" Not really, responded V R Devika, educationist and a single woman. "It's been happening over centuries and the aspect of being liberated is not restricted to men alone. Earlier, it was thought that marriage is for procreation. With women having half a dozen kids to look after, men were free to play around. Yes, transgressions were accepted then," she said.

Terming life's various relationships as a grey area, TM Krishna, Carnatic musician, was convinced that accepting polygamy did not make for a liberated society. The reason for men straying, according to him, was the instinc-

tive desire for sex. "There's something macho in men being sexually liberated. What makes life interesting are the grey areas," he stressed.

Shah highlighted the aspect of "breaking trust" between partners and with children. "The moment you have children, you've added huge responsibility." Divorce lawyer Sheila Jayaprakash agreed. "When children are involved, there is a certain amount of responsibility that parents have to show. The needs of a child have to be put first. If trust does not exist, not just children, partners lose out, too. How-

BOOK LAUNCH TRIGGERS DEBATE

ever, children have a lot more resilience that we give them credit for," she explained, and wondered why women were expected to have one partner while men did as they pleased. "You (men) can spread your seed, but when it comes to distributing wealth you want to be sure it's your child." Adopting a milder tone, Kaveri Lalchand, actor and publisher, said that relationships were all personal and that she knew of families where husbands and wives were okay with either being polygamists. All agreed that straightforwardness was the best thing when parents were not able to make their dynamics work.

Was life much easier in the older days when society offered more space? "We haven't moved forward. The laws against polygamy were framed post-Independence and coloured by Victorian-age beliefs," said Sheila.

'Life is Perfect' is Himani Dalmia's first book.